



Representing Drainage Water Level & Flood Risk Management Authorities

TECHNICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes

Remote Meeting via Zoom
Wednesday 16 September 2020
10.00am – 13.00pm
DRAFT FOR APPROVAL

Invitees					
Name	Representing	Present	Name	Representing	Present
Andrew Newton (AN)	Engineer - Ely Group of Drainage Boards	Y	Ed Johnson (EJ)	Chief Engineer - Witham Fourth IDB	Y
Chris Manning (CM)	Environmental Officer, WMC & Doncaster East IDB	Y	Innes Thomson (IT)	Chief Exec - ADA	Y
David Thomas (DT)	CE - Middle Level Commissioners	Y	Martin Shilling (MS)	Director of Operations & Engineering Services - Lincoln & District IDB's	Apol.
Diana Ward (DW)	Ecologist for Ely and Bedfordshire groups of IDB's	Y	Mat Jackson (MJ)	West Sussex CC	Y
Sadie Hobson (SH)	Natural England	Apol.	Martin Slater (MSr)	EA – Yorkshire Area	Y
Peter Bateson (PB)	CE - Witham Fourth IDB	Apol.	Roger Burge (RB)	CE & Clerk - Somerset IDB's	Y
Robert Caudwell (RC)	ADA Chairman	Y	Trevor Purlant (TP)	Committee Chairman	Y
Steve Graham (SG)	Bedford Pumps	Apol.	Sofi Lloyd (SL)	Committee Secretary & Tech. Officer - ADA	Y
Ian Moodie (IM)	Tech Manager - ADA	Y	Ian Nunn (IN)	EA deputy - Operations Manager Kent, South London and East Sussex	Apol.
Tim Farr (TF)	P&F Committee Chair	Y	Orlando Venn (OV)	Natural England deputy	Y

Ref	Minute	Action
	Formalities, Regular Topics & Updates	
1536	Apologies received and welcome to new members TP welcomed everyone to the meeting and a special mention and welcome to Orlando Venn (OV) from Natural England, deputising for SH, and to Martin Slater (SL) the new representative for the Environment Agency on the Committee. Ian Nunn (IN) will be the EA's deputy representative.	
1537	Declarations of Interest - TP None noted.	
1538	Approval of Minutes Minutes of the Committee's previous meeting held on 2 June 2020 were approved.	
1539	Action Log IM updated upon Education Project, ADA is still seeking volunteers to be ambassadors for their respective organisations, and the training is likely to be	

	<p>delayed until 2021.</p>	
<p>1540</p>	<p>Brief Workstream Updates</p> <p><u>Biodiversity Action Plan</u> SL reported that the updated model Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) was now complete as a final draft following feedback from Natural England. The new model BAP would be available for download following the ADA Conference in November 2020.</p> <p>MJ asked whether there had been consideration of incorporating ecosystem services and in particular NFM within the new model BAP, and whether each IDB would establish a baseline for habitats and species within their districts.</p> <p>SL noted that habitats and species is the focus of this work, but that partnership working can be captured within it. SL confirmed that each IDB's BAP is based on an initial audit of species and habitats within their district, there was nothing to stop Boards refreshing this part of their BAP in advance of the new model BAP's publication.</p> <p>Action: SL to share the final draft of the model IDB BAP with Committee members for final limited comments.</p> <p><u>Environmental Good Governance project update</u> SL noted good progress in her report to the Committee with the document's authors appointed, chapters and content outline agreed and drafting of text in progress. Chapter and sub-chapter headings issued to Defra PAG to review for comments on scope.</p> <p><u>Data & Evidence</u> SL: To be presented at Conference and within Winter 2020 ADA Gazette.</p> <p><u>Health, Safety & Welfare Sub-Committee</u> SL reported good progress, the Sub-Committee had now identified individual modules they wish to deliver. The intention being that these would be available to download as an audio presentation from ADA website and could be presented at IDB Board Meetings throughout the year. IT gave thanks to sub-committee members, and emphasised that the modules will be strategic in nature, and are not aimed at covering operational matters for field staff (i.e. are not toolbox talks). TP noted that care must be taken to avoid overdoing peoples' span of attention at Board meetings, so should be bitesize in nature. EJ noted that the presentations use doesn't have to be restricted to Board meetings, could be listened to anywhere (e.g. in the car or tractor) and shared with board members too. RC highlighted that it was most important that IDB Board members recognise their primary responsibility for the health safety and welfare of their staff and for their operations.</p> <p><u>IDB Biodiversity Metrics</u> IT introduced a discussion around the metrics that ADA has drafted to accompany the updated model IDB Biodiversity Action Plan. The purpose being to find simple ways of quantifying IDBs' collective contribution to the environmental agenda in order to promote this to the wider public and stakeholders. The aim has been to develop a broad suite of metrics from which each IDB would be able to contribute towards at least one, rather than an expectation that every IDB will contribute to every metric. ADA wanted to see IDBs on the front foot, by setting out their own environmental reporting that meets the direction of the Environment Bill, to avoid something less efficient or appropriate to IDBs being imposed at a later date. IT highlighted that at present</p>	

ADA and IDBs remained in control of the destiny of what this looks like, as we currently have the support and confidence of Defra, NE and EA on this.

DT asked about the recording of wider environmental metrics, e.g. waste management, carbon, energy, net gain etc. SL reported that these wider aspects could become a next step, but ADA wanted to start to process with habitats and species as this was a persistent area of challenge from wider stakeholders.

OV agreed that such metrics would be helpful and that these needed to be outcome focus and accessible to IDBs. OV asked about consideration of other metrics, such as the Defra/Natural England Metrics 2.0 or systems used by some water companies and local authorities already.

Others were concerned that these other metrics were more complex. It was felt that the metrics chosen needed to be easily digested by smaller authorities such as IDBs and that other metrics could be added to these in future iterations.

MSr noted that the EA had been through an evolution of its own environmental performance monitoring moving towards a system that was more outcome focused in terms of e.g. Km watercourse enhanced, km protected, or hectares of habitat created. It allows a number of individual actions being brought together into a cumulative series of metrics.

DW agreed it was a matter of providing positive evidence, but that there was a risk of these metrics being misleading if Defra or others perceived that each metric was applicable to every IDB, simply because they had been put forwards by ADA. RB also concerned about collection of data through IDB1. DW felt that many of the metrics as drafted go beyond an IDB's legal duties (example given was invasive non-native species), some metrics related to species that had increased in range and prevalence (e.g. otters or barn owl), and some were challenging to deliver as IDBs are not extensive landowners, example given was pollinators.

SL reiterated that it was not the intention that every IDB would contribute to every metric.

A common concern from the Committee was that in reporting such data through the IDB1 that each IDB would be judged on their own performance against a national suite of metrics rather than be accountable to the actions they had locally agreed within their individual BAPs. A number of IDB representatives on the committee would prefer a voluntary process of reporting to ADA so that individual IDB responses would not be disclosed.

IM was concerned about using a voluntary process as the response from IDBs had been slow or incomplete during previous surveys by ADA.

MJ noted that environmental outputs are likely to have a greater bearing on funding opportunities and that future opportunities can come out of recording such data.

CM and IM felt that IDBs need to make a step change in biodiversity reporting, since the cessation of BARS, ADA needed a simple system to start a flow of data from IDBs, and allow these to be expanded into other areas and more complex areas such as net gain in the next iteration in a few years' time. DW suggested ADA should be able to identify good practice by looking through individual IDB BAPs, and report and share examples of best practice.

Many agreed that that ADA would not have the resource to analyse every

IDB's BAP to obtain this information.

RC understood the nervousness of the IDB1 reporting route, but noted that if ADA simply collected limited positive data, it could be accused of cherry picking data. ADA wants to be able to stand up positively in front of the media with some positive facts about IDBs.

IT understood that to record the data directly, outside of the IDB1 form, ADA would have to commit to spending money to gather and review data.

Many agreed that metrics must be progressed urgently so the approach agreed must be fast-tracked.

TP summed up the agreed way forward:

ACTION: Committee members each submit a couple of quantifiable metrics that could reasonably be recorded annually by their IDB.

ACTION: ADA reviews and refines the list of quantifiable metrics suggested, consulting where necessary.

ACTION: ADA consolidates this list of metrics and publishes it alongside the updated IDB BAP in November 2020.

PROPOSAL TO BOARD: ADA to consider employing an FTE Technical Administrator in 2021 to assist ADA with seeking and recording data and information, including Biodiversity Metrics.

ACTION: ADA collects metrics data directly from IDBs through something similar to SurveyMonkey on a confidential basis for the first year (2021). The list of IDB's who contribute will be published so those who do not will be identifiable by their absence from the list.

FUTURE DECISION: Responses are reviewed by ADA and selected metrics would then become part of a national reporting system in future years thereafter, either through the IDB1 form, an annual ADA survey, or another system.

MJ suggested creating an ADA Best Environmental initiative award to stimulate biodiversity delivery by IDBs. IM keen to take this forward as part of BAP relaunch.

Education

IM gave an update on the project. A draft of the classroom and field visit activities had been shared by the LEAF Education consultants with ADA, and ADA had returned comments. These would focus more on the geography syllabus. Intention is to create further iterations of the case studies, which are focused on the Somerset Levels to also cover The Fens and The Humber. The planned training event for Education Ambassadors had effectively been postponed into 2021 and ADA was still keen to seek volunteers from IDBs. MJ asked about LLFAs and the ambassador training. IM confirmed that this training would be open to local authorities that were ADA Members too.

New Workstreams

MJ suggested the silt management workstream should focus on looking at erosion and sources of erosion, not just dealing with silt within watercourses. TF had discussed this proposed workstream with the P&F Committee, who had noted a number of different aspects: evidence base for undertaking de-silting work, soil protection and silt prevention (e.g. run-off control and silt traps), integration of silt management with other measures, and avoiding negative

	<p>perception when silt management can be an enhancement to the environment as well if managed appropriately.</p> <p>CM noted that there remained a need to look at the benefit statements being used by operators to spread silt on land under exemption when undertaking de-silting operations on lowland watercourses.</p> <p>ACTION: TP, SL, IM, TF to meet to draft scope of this workstream.</p>	
1541	<p>General Updates</p> <p><u>Summary of last ADA Board meeting</u> As tabled, no further discussion.</p> <p><u>ADA Meetings and Events update 2020 and 2021</u> IT reported that it was anticipated that ADA meetings would be held remotely until further notice. ADA is encouraging ADA Branches to hold remote meetings, in particular to undertake AGMs. Some Branches had already scheduled these. It was expected that the Conference and AGM will take place separately on the same day in 2020 remotely via Zoom webinars. Environment Minister, Rebecca Pow, and a senior EA speaker have been confirmed as speakers, a third speaker from National Trust has been invited. EUWMA 2020 meeting, scheduled to be hosted in the Netherlands, were likely to be held remotely. ADA would be encouraging members to register for the Flood & Coast online seminars later this year. Flood & Coast intends to revert back to a live event in June 2021. FLOODEX 2021 is still be planned, but prepared that this is dictated by COVID situation. FLOODEX 2021 will be the last in this series of static exhibition events held with Indigo Media. ADA intended to return to hosting a periodic live demonstration event once again thereafter. The first of these is likely to be held in South Yorkshire in 2022. ADA Conference 2021 is booked for Wednesday 10 Nov 2021 at One Great George Street. Will be the date for our change of President as Lord De Ramsey plans to stand down.</p> <p>ACTION: IT to confirm the liability and any cut off dates that relate to FLOODEX 2021 and COVID-19.</p> <p><u>Gazette discussion</u> IM requested feedback from the Committee on the ADA Gazette and encouraged more articles to be submitted from members. MJ asked about whether the Gazette could simply be a digital magazine or whether it could be printed on more sustainable or recycled paper. IM reported that the Gazette is already published digitally on the ADA website and printed on FSC approved paper, and in 2020 has been distributed in recyclable packaging.</p> <p>RC highlighted the importance of good quality images and had suggested ADA holding a photographic competition to acquire more images for the magazine and to publicise its members' work.</p> <p>CM suggested an index list is kept up to date and available through the website.</p> <p>AN suggested ADA could offer a copywriting service for IDBs or members, potentially for a fee, in order to help members develop press releases and articles for the ADA Gazette as well as their own communications.</p> <p><u>Policy & Finance Committee update</u></p>	

	<p>Largely highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NaFRA2 • Winter readiness meeting • Budget, underspend • Ratings reform • Innovative resilience funding opportunities for IDBs. • High land water contributions <p><u>Consultations</u> SL updated committee on ADA responses recently completed (ELMS and Tree Strategy) and ongoing. WFD Challenges and choices consultation response, ADA response prepared, one out all out concept challenged, not always supportive of positive environmental actions on all watercourses. Would welcome sight of members' responses. MSr: The classification system works much like an MOT, can fail on somewhat smaller aspects. MSr: Only 16% are in good, 77% are at good or better. This is part of the directive. It is why EA moved to report on km enhanced.</p> <p>IT: Have written a letter of support expressing ADA's view that the pure consideration of the one out all out perceived very negatively. Concern is it doesn't always encourage best practice or the best focus on improvement.</p> <p><u>PSCAs</u> SL working with JY on who is doing what around breaches, disputes and complaints. IT: Winter readiness, wider request to IDBs to engage with their local EA teams. Concept of utilising PSCAs proactively to cover potential engagement needed from IDBs during emergency events and after for recovery efforts promoted. MSr supports that, in south Yorkshire worked very closely with IDBs during recent emergency events but was then difficult to pick out finances after so upfront planning in this regard would be beneficial through PSCA's.</p> <p><u>Environment Forum</u> SL introduced the paper about the forum. The Committee was supportive of SL forming an Environment Forum as proposed.</p>	
Discussion		
1542	<p>AOB</p> <p><u>Commencing summer maintenance & nesting birds (see papers)</u> SL: Increasing number of complaints being received around the timing of summer maintenance by IDBs. Would it be good for ADA to prepare some best practice advice on the matter? CM something I am uneasy about. Defra breeding season has been extended. Looking at smaller passerines, their nesting period tends to end much earlier. Warblers do nest into September, so can impact cutting of mature reed. Incidental defence means can't be avoided. EA approach is to keep things cut on critical defences. Holistic management approach, to demonstrate compliance with the law. EJ something we have been battling with for many years. Early maintenance used to be covered with chemical control and low disturbance. These are now unavailable, but have to protect settlements from flood risk. What can we do to mitigate the impact of the work, surveying. Buffer zones, leaving sections uncut. MJ Methods of working, good biodiversity window. DW will already have best practice guidance. Not easy to identify warbler nests in sedge and reed. To have appropriate contingency planning in place and</p>	

	make sure you have taken reasonable steps to meet the incidental need. Many: Should issue a bird nesting readiness article in the Gazette prior to maintenance season. SL: Should also refer to a mitigation hierarchy.	
1543	Future Meeting Dates 2021 The Committee agreed the following dates for their meetings in 2021: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20th January • 26th May • 14th September 	
9.	Close of meeting	

APPROVED